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THE NATION

State's Secrets

The Pentagon, it seems, was not the only Government department to make a top-secret retrospective study of the nation's decisions in Viet Nam. In 1968 Tom Hughes, then director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, ordered another report, far less voluminous and ambitious but with considerable potential impact.

Composed by two State Department Asia analysts, the study compared the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations' key Viet Nam decisions with the bureau's own major judgments during the same period. In almost every case, the intelligence reports called the shots perfectly about such matters as the ineffectiveness of the bombing campaign, Vietnamese political upheavals and North Vietnamese troop buildups. Daniel Ellsberg is said to have read the study as a consultant for Henry Kissinger in 1969 and reacted: "My God, this is astonishing. I thought the CIA stuff was great, but these papers are even more accurate."

After publication of the Pentagon papers, the two known copies of the State Department study have been locked away, and Ray Cline, the intelligence bureau's current director, has forbidden subordinates to admit their existence.